

2001 Annual Report Georgia





Stephens Federal Building
355 E. Hancock Avenue
Athens, GA 30601
(706) 546-2272 or
www.ga.nrcs.usda.gov



Dear Georgians,

I am excited to present to you the 2001 Annual Report of accomplishments for the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). Protecting the health of our precious natural resources is vital to the well-being of our citizens.

Working through a strong delivery system at the local level, the Georgia Conservation Partnership delivers expert, science-based conservation planning assistance to those who want to voluntarily protect and conserve our natural resources. The partnership delivers its assistance through a highly trained technical staff skilled in natural resource management. The staff is assisted by community volunteers who give freely of their time, energy, and expertise to ensure a healthy land for future generations. These volunteers serve on the Soil and Water Conservation Commission, District Boards, Resource Conservation & Development Councils and work side-by-side with employees as Earth Team volunteers.

A study conducted in 2001 by the American Customer Satisfaction Index is a tribute to the success of the conservation partnership. The customer satisfaction rating of 81 out of a possible 100 points received for conservation technical assistance delivery is 10 points higher than Americans rate private sector services and more than 12 points higher than the Index for Federal government services.

As State Conservationist for Georgia, I am committed to ensuring that our employees continue to receive the support they need to provide the best possible on-site assistance to natural resource managers.

I am proud of our accomplishments and our partnership. I look forward to working together to address tomorrow's challenges. Together we can, and will, make a difference.

NRCS Mission

To provide leadership in a partnership effort to help people conserve, maintain, and improve our natural resources and environment

NRCS Vision

A productive nation in harmony with a quality environment

Conservation Planning Initiative

The conservation planning initiative in Georgia is designed to assist field office personnel in developing the capability to provide quality products to landusers in the field.

The emphasis is on providing information and planning assistance on-site, on the farm, in real time.

Previously, field staff would collect information, provide information verbally, return to the field office to process, perform calculations, and print materials that would be carried back to the producer for signatures and review.

Today, the technology is available and in use for staff to perform all of these functions on-site.

NRCS Workforce and Organization

Georgia has 232 full-time employees providing service in every county across the state.



An additional 104 NRCS Earth Team Volunteers help put conservation on the ground.

In addition, other partners include:

- 59 County employees
- 3 Soil & Water Conservation District Employees
- 13 State employees
- 9 RC&D employees
- 606 RC&D Volunteers
- 370 Unpaid Soil and Water Conservation District Officials
- 35 Soil & Water Conservation District offices



Ninety-three percent of the NRCS field offices are collocated with at least one other USDA agency and 100 percent are collocated with Soil and Water Conservation Districts.

Program Summary

This annual report covers one fiscal year, from October 1, 2000 to September 30, 2001.

Conservation Outlook in Georgia

Georgia has over 28 million acres of agricultural land, with 4.6 million acres in cropland, 2.8 million acres in grasslands, and 21.2 million acres in forest. The major crops grown are cotton, soybeans, peanuts, corn, wheat, tobacco, grain sorghum, and vegetables.

The most extensive agricultural erosion problems occur on cropland, with over 3 million acres requiring some form of conservation treatment. About 440,900 of these acres are considered to be highly erodible.

Severe weather conditions, including drought and flooding in recent years, have resulted in statewide concerns for the use and management of the state's water resources.

Many efforts are under way to evaluate future water needs and allocations for domestic, individual, and agricultural uses.

Soil Surveys

Soil surveys provide a comprehensive inventory of soil resources and conditions that describe soil erodibility, soil productivity and properties that affect suitability for many uses. NRCS is authorized by Congress to conduct a soil survey of the nation.

In Georgia, 124 counties have published soil surveys; 17 counties have completed soil surveys that are in the process of being published; 16 are presently being surveyed and 3 counties are in the process of being updated.

In 2001, 382,000 acres were surveyed for a cumulative total of 35,439,782 acres, or 94 percent of the state. NRCS soil scientists in Georgia have updated 1,925,814 of the 35 million acres.

One of the major goals is to enhance partnerships to map and digitized soil data on the remaining acres. During the year, our soils team digitized 5 soil survey areas for SSURGO (Soil Survey Geographic Database). There are now 15 soil survey areas (22 counties) with a SSURGO database.

Private Grazing Land Assistance

Georgia's livestock producers continue to adopt con-

servation practices that promote the efficient use of their grazing land resources, while conserving soil and water quality.

The Georgia Grazing Lands Conservation Coalition (GGLCC) practice demonstration project is a producer developed cost-share program designed to demonstrate innovative practices on existing forage and livestock operations. In 2001, 43 producers were assisted by the program--double the number of participants in 2000.

Other accomplishments include a statewide Forage Conference, the development of a website, and the addition of a new Model Farm project.

Resource Conservation & Development (RC&D)

Georgia has 11 RC&D Councils covering 127 counties. Local RC&D Councils provide a way for people to plan and implement projects that will make their communities a better place to live.

RC&D Councils are made up of local volunteers. NRCS provides a coordinator and administrative support for the program.

In 2001, Georgia RC&D initiated the first Wheels to Work Program in the country. This program provides reliable, previously-owned vehicles for qualified participants to purchase with no money down, no interest, and a minimal monthly payment. In 2001, 1866 people received affordable automobiles helping them move from welfare to work.

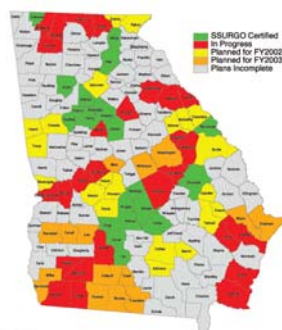
Georgia's Coffee County Conservation Tillage Alliance (CCCTA) was recognized as one of the top no-till conservation innovators in the nation. Two members of the CCCTA, Orson Adams and Rick Reed, serve as Council members on the Seven Rivers RC&D Board.

The Rural Road Striping Program was funded through the Georgia Environmental Facilities Authority in 1997 as a pilot energy conservation project. The purpose was to demonstrate a more fuel efficient method of paving roads. The grant funds allowed Councils to purchase the latest technology in airless road striping and video guidance equipment. This technology would make it possible for a single well-trained operator to stripe roads without assistance. The Counties would have to provide an employee to assist in directing traffic by acting as a follow car.

This program is also in partnership with Georgia Department of Transportation who formulated paint and reflective beads that would improve the visibility and safety on rural county roads.

Project WINGS (Wildlife Incentives for Nongame

SSURGO Certification Schedule
(Soil Survey Geographic Database)



and Game Species) is a rights-of-way management campaign designed to create new wildlife lands beneath electrical transmission lines.

The project works by offering cash grants and professional wildlife management advice to groups and individuals committed to three years of rights-of-way wildlife management. Project WINGS is a joint venture between Georgia Power, Georgia Transmission, Municipal Electric Authority of Georgia and the Two Rivers RC&D Council with technical assistance from the USDA-NRCS.

Plant Materials

The Jimmy Carter Plant Materials Center (PMC) in Americus, is releasing the first native grass in 2002 that has a Southeastern Origin. Seed is expected to be available commercially in about two years. The Center continues to develop the native grass technology that pertains to seeding rates, establishment and management under Southeastern Climatic conditions.

Information on native grasses is available on the PMC homepage and hard copies of a recent publication on Native Grasses has been provided to field offices in the five states (GA, SC, NC, FL, AL and TN) the center serves.

Studies are ongoing to develop the plant technology and release other native grasses, such as eastern gamagrass, virginia wildrye, and big bluestem.

Small Watershed Program

Since 1952, a total of 73 small watershed projects have been approved for operations in Georgia. There are currently two active flood prevention projects and seven active watershed protection projects.

Through the small watershed program, more than 160,000 acres of land are receiving flood prevention benefits from the installation of 357 floodwater retarding structures. Over 4,000 acres of critically eroding areas have been treated and 280 long-term contracts have been signed to treat approximately 45,000 acres. These projects are annually providing \$17,000,000 worth of benefits.

River Basin Program

The purpose of the River Basin Program is to provide our customers with assistance in using water and related resources in a timely and efficient manner.

In 2001, over 250 individuals and organizations were

assisted through the River Basin Program. NRCS also assisted client's and partners in the preparation and submission of grant applications totaling \$3,047,557 for conservation activities throughout the state.

Floodplain management studies provide information and assistance to local and state entities so they can implement programs for reducing existing and potential flood damages. Eleven floodplain management studies have been completed to date, including one for Union County in 2001. A floodplain management study for Banks County is currently underway.

Cost-Share Programs

Environmental Quality Incentives Program

The EQIP program provided \$3.2 million to 471 producers in 2000 through incentive payments and cost sharing for conservation practices called for in a site-specific plan.

	Applications Received	Applications Funded	Financial Assistance	Educational Assistance
Priority	1088	204	2,269,830	43,470
Statewide	960	188	801,573	20,130
Outreach	53	25	115,497	3,500

Forestry Incentives Program (FIP)

The Forestry Incentives Program is one of the most popular programs in the state. 670 landowners applied for funding. A total of 335 contracts were approved and \$697,750 was disbursed.

Landowners participating in the program planted 8,794 acres in the 2000-2001 planting season, resulting in over 6.3 million trees being planted. Timber products are being increasingly used in the state due to the growing population.

Wetlands Reserve Program

The Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) is a voluntary program that provides technical and financial assistance to eligible landowners to restore, enhance, and protect wetlands. Landowners have the option of enrolling lands through permanent easements, 30-year easements, and restoration cost-share agreement.

Georgia has 8,489 acres enrolled in WRP. Five new projects were funded in 2001. There are 6 unfunded projects that could add about 23,350 acres into the program. Landowners have become increasingly interested in WRP as a result of the conservation planning efforts on individual farms.

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